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By-Howe, Harold II

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Among the topics: (1) although high school is usually available to Negroes, quality is poor; (2) recent awareness that schools have failed, not children; (3) need to reach children younger, in school, home, and community; (4) low ratio of attendance of poor but able students at college; (5) intense desire of Negroes for higher education; (6) the able student's right to both funds and opportunity to pursue his schooling; (7) awareness that poor preparation can hide real ability; (8) need to desegregate, however slowly, the Negro college; (9) need to encourage the strong Negro college, to upgrade the medium, and to retain even the poorest as one more resource or to absorb it into another system; (10) scarcity of programs for the genuinely disadvantaged in white schools; (11) alteration of admission standards and credentials by all colleges; (12) compensatory, remedial, and guidance programs to help make up for disadvantages; (13) suggestion that Negro colleges supply other schools with their knowledge of working with the deprived; (14) support of federal funding for special programs; (15) need for completion of as well as enrollment in college; (16) possibility of pairing off poorer schools with prestige institutions; (17) appropriate, rather than romantic, Afro-American studies; (18) statewide planning needs; (19) preferential funding for central-city schools over suburban; (20) making professional careers socially as well as economically worthwhile for Negroes; (21) importance of private resources in this entire effort. (HH)

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THE NEGRO AMERICAN AND HIGHER EDUCATION*

Remarks by Harold Howe II
U.S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

I am as delighted to be here today as I am sorry it is necessary for any of us to be here at all. For one of the first things to be said about holding a conference on higher education for Negroes in America is that there should be no need to hold such a meeting.

Nearly two centuries after the Declaration of Independence. a century or so after the Civil War and the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution, we ought to have progressed beyond the point where we have to think of Negro Americans as a separate and distinct group requiring special adjustments in higher education--and indeed in all levels of education and in other aspects of our national life as well.

The Civil War may have marked the end of involuntary servitude in America, but we are a long way from ending the involuntary segregation and second class citizenship that succeeded it. Perhaps we can take some encouragement from the actions of the Congress and the courts during the past 15 years, and from efforts to build on those actions, but any such encouragement must be tempered by a realistic assessment of our failure to use these new instruments of public policy to their full effect.

Indeed, we must admit that some of the hope and optimism and dedication of the civil rights movement has turned to bitterness and frustration and that we confront new forms of separatist ideology along with elements of extremism which advocate violence rather than orderly

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change. We cannot speak of higher education for the Negro American without taking account of these developments. Nor can we speak of it without first looking at the earlier levels of education that have so much to say about who gets a higher education.

It is true today, as it was ten or twenty years ago, that the elementary and secondary education made available to Negroes is utterly inadequate, but we can point to one element of progress. No longer is this condition considered immutable. Ten or twenty years ago, many Americans felt free to say about Negro and other disadvantaged youngsters that they had been offered their chance for an education--that the school doors had been open to them--but that they had stubbornly refused to learn. And then, with an approximation of a clear conscience, these members of the white majority consigned their black-skinned fellow citizens to the lower levels of social and economic life that have been their traditional inheritance in America.

But today, if nothing else, the Nation's conscience is far from clear about the self-defeating, segregated, second-rate elementary and secondary schooling that has been the lot of Negro Americans and members of other minority groups--including a good number of poor whites. We continue to offer inferior education to those who most need excellent education--the neediest and least powerful and the most oppressed. The difference, the necessary difference if change is to occur, is that this inequity has begun to bother us so much that we find it hard to live with ourselves.

All across the country today there are people of good will--professional educators and interested laymen alike--who are doing their level best to move the schools into being places where every child, whatever his race or the economic condition of his family, can discover and develop his abilities and his interests and use these as his passport to success in our society. In a few years time, we have managed to make a 180-degree turn in our attitude toward education: where we used to assume that it was the child who failed in school, we now recognize that it is the school that fails the child.

To be sure, this change in attitude is not universal. It is nevertheless widespread among those that I would characterize as the leaders in the education community, and it is becoming pervasive as well in the local communities that the schools serve.

This new perspective, this new determination that no one will be excluded from learning, has without question been largely stimulated by the President who will soon leave the White House, with the strong support of his Cabinet and of the Congress. Never in the Nation's history has the Federal Government done so much to improve the schools as it has during the past four years.

But we have only begun. There is no more significant question related to education facing the new Administration about to enter Washington than the question of whether it will continue or whether it will dilute the Federal effort to focus available funds on the problems of the poor and the discriminated against.

We cannot afford to lose the momentum it has taken us so long to build up. The new Federal education programs that we have recently undertaken--large as they may seem--are really little more than pilot projects when you look at them in terms of the vast educational needs that must be met. We are a long way, still, from knowing for certain exactly what we ought to do to offer quality education to the poor--and a longer way from doing it.

But we do know that we need to reach children younger; that we need to reinforce the purposes of the school by enlisting home and community as its allies rather than alienating them; that we need to train new teachers differently and retrain many now on the job; that we need to reduce racial isolation in our schools; and that we need to do all these things at once in schools which are underfinanced, overcrowded, and seething with discontent.

It will take a long time to do these things, even with full funding of existing programs at the Federal level. Without that funding, it will take even longer--assuming that the people directly affected will <u>give</u> us any more time while they continue to bear the burdens of second-class citizenship.

In the long run, it is this effort to strengthen the educational opportunities offered in the elementary and secondary schools that will do most to remove the obstacles that stand between the Negro and quality higher education. But as John Maynard Keynes liked to say, in the long run we're all dead. And we face, here and now, the problem of making education beyond the high school possible for the thousands upon thousands

of young people who have been short-changed by school and society in their earlier years. We face the challenge of altering our system of higher education so that it can effectively accomodate those whose earlier education has been inferior, mainly because they were so unwise as to have been born poor, or black, or Spanish speaking.

Americans must begin by recognizing that higher education in America today is still predominantly a white, upper class enterprise. The children of lower income parents, regardless of their school achievement levels, are much less likely to enter college and much more likely to drop out than their more affluent contemporaries. Take, for example, the top 20 percent of our high school graduates--as measured by various standard achievement tests. Of these, eight out of ten youngsters whose families are in the highest socioeconomic quartile enter college in the year after high school. But only four out of ten students with the same ability and performance but in the lowest socioeconomic quartile enter college immediately after high school.

In short, among high school graduates of approximately the same achievement levels, the affluent are more than twice as likely to move right into college as their indigent peers. Since such a large percentage of Negroes are poor, it is no mystery why in 1967, for example, Negro college students accounted for only six percent of our total college population, although almost twelve percent of our national population was Negro.

Recent studies and surveys have also made us aware that--despite all the difficulties--a lot more Negroes want to go to college than many

may have imagined. Surveys reveal, for example, that low-income Negroes have a greater desire to enter college than low-income whites. They reveal also that among high school seniors, a higher percentage of nonwhites than whites plan to enter college. Clearly the Negro sees and seeks the opportunity which lies in higher education.

Despite all the talk about apathy and lack of interest--despite the deeply discouraging experience of twelve years of inadequate schooling--the statistics and surveys demonstrate that the desire to take advantage of higher education, to make something of himself, is extremely strong in Negro youth. Unfortunately they also show that his desire is often thwarted--because he is poor, or because he is poorly prepared, or because he is black, or for all these reasons and a few more besides.

The time has come in this country to do two things: First, to guarantee that every student with the ability to pursue a higher education has the resources and the opportunity to do so, no matter what his race, his income, or his place of residence. Second, we must go beyond this basic guarantee to find ways of offering quality higher education to those who, because of race, income, residence and the like, do not receive the academic preparation ordinarily required for the pursuit of higher education.

This means, among other things, that we must redefine what we mean by "quality" and "standards" on the one hand and by "ability" on the other. We are going to have to stop equating quality and standards solely with the idea of rigidly imposed requirements that it is up to the individual to meet. We must include in the definition of these terms the capacity of the institution to produce change and progress in the individual. We are

going to have to stop equating "ability" simply with performance as measured at a given moment and expand the meaning of that word to include some concept of potential related to motivation, to past deprivation, and to the possibility of rapid change in individual performance through special and intensive assistance.

"Quality," I would suggest, must come more and more to measure the ability of our colleges and universities to offer genuine learning experiences to different kinds of students--including the disadvantaged. And "ability" must, I think, be interpreted in terms that reflect an understanding of the fact that evidence of poor preparation does not necessarily mean innate incapacity. Just as we are beginning to learn that education can never really begin too early, we are learning that it can begin a lot later than we used to think.

What, then, are we doing--and what more can we do--to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, of the Negro in particular, for superior higher education?

I hope you will permit me the liberty of some oversimplification in describing higher education for Negroes in terms of three distinct kinds of institutions that serve them in varying degrees.

First, there are the predominantly Negro colleges, some 111 of them, of which 76 are accredited, mostly in the South, enrolling more than half of the Negro College students in America and producing a large majority of the bachelor's degrees awarded to Negroes. Second, there are the predominantly white colleges and universities, many of which--particularly those in the North--are belatedly trying to do better in meeting the special

needs of minority groups by admitting more of their number and by developing programs to serve them. And third, there are the junior and community colleges, which have experienced the most rapid growth among institutions of higher education. I would like to examine each of these categories seperately.

The predominantly Negro college has been the subject of searching--and sometimes searing--scrutiny in recent years. I won't dwell at length on the issues and arguments that have been advanced over that period. Many of you doubtless know them by heart. But I would like to touch upon the two most persistent problems raised about the predominantly Negro college.

The first is that it is segregated, and segregation is in theory at least an institution that we aim to abolish in this country. The sad but simple fact is, of course, that the predominantly Negro college is needed today just as much, and for much the same reasons, as it was when it originated in the latter nineteenth century. Today as in that earlier time, its basic mission is to meet the educational needs of young Negroes whose inadequate early education, whose poverty, whose place of residence, whose race, whose culture, all rendered them ineligible for the opportunities available to more advantaged Americans. The Negro college ought not to be predominantly Negro forever. But today, as one hundred years ago, the choice has been forced upon it, not freely made. Happily a few of these colleges have struggled to a level of quality that makes them a part of the mainstream of higher education and that will progressively dilute their segregated characteristics.

Secondly, there is the issue of whether all the existing Negro institutions should be kept going. There are those who say that, while every assistance and encouragement should be given to the strong Negro colleges and to those of the middle-range group that could become first rate with enough help, there is a third group of weaker and poorer colleges that ought to be allowed to expire. If it were clear that we had more than enough colleges to go around, so that we could afford to lose a few here and there, then I suppose we could agree. But simply in terms of facilities--let alone in terms of quality--we have nowhere near enough higher education opportunities available for the black and the disadvantaged.

With the prospect that both the demand for higher education and the costs of providing it will grow by leaps and bounds in the decades immediately ahead, I fail to see how we can afford to squander even the most humble of our resources--how we can follow any other course but to husband and nourish every resource at our disposal.

It seems to me that we will move ahead a lot farther a lot faster by working with existing institutions than by throwing up our hands and abandoning them to their own devices--and thereby almost surely abandoning the students they serve. At the same time we have to admit that the least strong of the Negro colleges are providing very ineffective education, that their leadership has not been realistic in addressing their weaknesses, and that they are having difficulty adjusting to the new attitudes and values which have rapidly pervaded Negro youth in the 1960's.

Setting these needs and problems against each other I come up with the following three recommendations:

(1) Looking to the next ten or fifteen years, it is necessary to keep alive a considerable number of the struggling, predominantly Negro colleges.

(2) Both public and private resources must be made available to encourage the kind of planning and change in these institutions which will either lead to their improvement and their joining the mainstream of higher education, or to their absorption by other public or private systems of education, or to their abandonment in favor of new public institutions.

(3) The kinds of public institutions which must be rapidly developed both in the South and in the central cities of the North to do the job of starting the Negro on the road to success in higher education should probably be community colleges with very flexible programs which can both emphasize remedial work and lead to transfer to four year colleges.

If these directions are followed, major new resources will be required from the private sector, from the States, and from the Federal government. But those resources should be so administered that they do not perpetuate ineffective institutions over the long haul. In other words, we must face up to the problem of propping up second-rate education for the Negro in order to make first-rate education as available to him as it is to any other American citizen.

Now I want to turn to the role of the solid center of higher education in the United States, the existing predominantly white institutions. Recently the Southern Education Report summarized the results of a survey of the efforts of these institutions of higher education across the country to meet the educational needs of the so-called "high risk" or genuinely disadvantaged students. Of the 215 institutions queried--about 13 percent of all the Nation's four-year institutions--159 responded. Only a little more than half of these--53 percent--had any measure of involvement in programs for "high risk" students. The rest had no involvement at all. No more than 20 had programs that could be considered comprehensive, and no more than six or eight were dealing with students that could legitimately be called "high risks."

Obviously we have a long way to go before we will have at our predominantly white institutions really effective and extensive programs for those who have missed out on quality education in the elementary and secondary years.

The first step in any of these programs must, of course, be to admit--indeed, to invite--the students they are designed to serve. And this will require a rather wholesale overhaul of the admissions policies that prevail at many colleges and universities. It will require that our universities stop confusing admission standards with academic standards.

The second and equally important step is to give these students all the support they need in terms of compensatory, remedial, counseling and other programs to see them through the entire four--or, if need be, five

or even six--years of college. This is one area in which I should think that some of the predominantly Negro colleges, with their experience and expertise in working with the educationally deprived student, could be of immense help to the predominantly white colleges that are only beginning to deal with him.

The Federal Government, as you know, already has in operation a number of programs to help the student from a family of poverty to pay for college--among them, the Educational Opportunity Grant and the College Work-Study programs to provide financial aid and such recruitment and incentive programs as Talent Search and Upward Bound. We need not only to expand these programs but to tie them together much more closely, so that we don't on the one hand encourage a lower-income student to enter college and on the other tell him we're all out of the aid money he needs to do it.

The Higher Education Amendments Act of 1968 created a new program designed to help the educationally deprived student stay and succeed in college once he enters. But while this new program is authorized, it is not yet funded. This program, it seems to me, is essential to a comprehensive Federal effort to encourage disadvantaged youngsters not only to enter but to finish college. It deserves prompt and full funding by the next Congress, and I commend it to the new Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the new Commissioner of Education, whoever they may be. To which I would modestly add that one might reasonably expect more of an impression to be made if you who are attending this meeting press for such funds rather than relying on me to pass on the word.

In addition to the institutional aid offered under the Developing Institutions section of the Higher Education Act, the new Networks for Knowledge program--authorized under the Higher Education Amendments of 1968--offers some very real opportunities for predominantly Negro colleges to join with other higher education institutions in a variety of relationships. I am aware that efforts to pair off poorer institutions with prestige institutions have met with more than their share of problems. But the fact that these relationships haven't worked ideally so far is no reason why they cannot be made to work well in the future.

The benefits, it seems to me, can extend in both directions. I have already mentioned the invaluable assistance our predominantly Negro colleges could give their predominantly white counterparts in developing programs for disadvantaged or "high risk" students. Similarly, it seems to me they could make available to other institutions such special resources as their unique faculty and library competence in Afro-American studies.

The time has got to come when blacks and whites in America cease seeing each other in sterotyped terms, as I am afraid they still do, and recognize their common humanity. And it seems to me that strong mutual relationships between predominantly black and predominantly white institutions of higher learning provide a good way to begin to build some understanding based on reality. In this connection, I think that higher education institutions generally ought to recognize the black American's feeling of pride in himself and his race, and to respond to that feeling

by appropriate programs of study. These studies should not be highly romanticized versions of the black experience and the black contribution to America. They should instead look honestly at our past and present and help us all to confront a history which many white Americans find it more comfortable to ignore.

More than this, our universities must address themselves to the entire field of race relations--in all its social, cultural, and psychological aspects--with the same intellectual rigor and responsibility they bring to other fields. For most of their students, white and black, and certainly for the society surrounding them, the race issue is one of the most important facts of daily life. This issue can neither be ignored nor treated irresponsibly.

Beyond the Federal Government and the higher education community itself, there is much that our States can do to improve equality of educational opportunity. It is difficult to generalize in speaking about the States, because they differ so widely. Certainly it is reasonable to suggest that all States need to re-examine their positions on how they help poor people get the opportunity to participate in higher education. They ought, for example, to have some comprehensive planning for community colleges--as some States do. They ought to re-examine their levels of spending for higher education--eliminating disparities between the support given to predominantly Negro colleges, or to colleges and institutions that in large part serve the disadvantaged, and the support given to the State institutions that essentially serve the middle class.

Some day it is likely to occur to the lower middle class and poor people of this country that the tax structure of many of our States makes the less-well-to-do pay in large part for the post-secondary education of the children of the rich. When that awakening takes place, the State colleges and universities will be in trouble unless they are moving to serve all the people who support them, and not just some.

Finally, at every level of Government and within the higher education community itself, we must adjust to the fact that about 55 percent of Negro Americans live in our central cities--and that according to authoritative estimates, their number and proportion will increase markedly during the period of 1970 to 1985. Higher education is not prepared to serve them now and is making little visible progress toward being able to serve them in the future. One major impediment, of course, is that the economics of higher education in the central city are forbidding--land, construction, teacher's salaries: everything costs more. Thus our community colleges, which could provide essential services to help meet the educational needs of the inner-city poor, tend to be located outside the central cities.

We have to start doing something about this dearth of post-secondary educational opportunities in precisely those places where the need is most acute. The poor of the inner-city are by definition those least able to move outside the narrow environs in which they are enclosed. I would like to see our States start giving proportionately more money for community colleges located within cities than for those in less congested areas. And I would like to see more substantial Federal construction grants for higher education institutions in the central city than outside it. I would like,

in fact, to see a whole host of innovative and imaginative enterprises, storefront and sidewalk and whatever other kind of post secondary arrangement will serve the purpose--supported as need be by Federal, State, and local money--to meet the education needs of the central city poor. An Urban College Act could well command the attention of the next Administration.

The prescription I can give you in the time we have here is in no sense a bill of particulars, but perhaps such a prescription would be useful to this conference as a basis for preparing that kind of a document:

**In higher education, as in elementary and secondary education, we are going to have to reach out to people where they are and as they are.

**At all levels of education, we are going to have to operate more fully on the assumption that it is not the student who fails in school but the school which fails the student.

**We are going to have to revise radically our notions of higher education in this country--to rid it of insupportable elitist assumptions whose principal effect is to reserve the hallowed halls of higher education for the affluent, and to rule out the black and the poor.

**We are going to have to open wide our college doors to black and poor students who lack some of the ordinary credentials.

**We are going to have to institute special programs to help compensate for years upon years of inferior early education.

**We are going to have to encourage more black students to pursue graduate degrees, to enter professions that have

always seemed closed to them (how many black architects are there?) or those that don't seem worth the trouble because they don't lead anywhere but back to the ghetto (the number of black doctors, for example, is declining).

In short, we must use every resource we have to open up educational opportunities for black Americans at the top while we make the slow, difficult improvements that must come at the lower levels. Among the resources we have is the good will and interest of private philanthropy, represented by the United Negro College Fund which has called us together here. Private resources are a significant element in accomplishing the difficult tasks before us. They can make State and Federal efforts more effective and more efficient. They can preserve an important independent element in the education of Negro Americans. For such reasons as these, much more is needed from private sectors than is now forthcoming.

In closing let me say that I do not know how long it will take white and black Americans to be ready to live and learn together. It has already taken far too long. In education, any further delay is both perilous and wasteful. Whether in kindergarten or in college, educational opportunity must become equal for black as well as white if this great Nation is to remain strong and free.

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